

STATINTL

CIA Man's Immunities Are Studied

BALTIMORE (UPI) —A federal court judge here is faced with a legal dilemma unique in the annals of American jurisprudence: Is a U.S. secret agent immune from the ordinary laws of the nation?

The question stems from a civil slander suit brought by Erik Heine, 46, of Rexdale, Ont., a suburb of Toronto, against Juri Raus, 39, of Hyattsville, Md., an engineer for the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads.

Raus is national commander of an Estonian emigre organization dedicated to freeing the little Baltic nation from Russian rule; Heine is also prominent in the same cause.

Heine alleges that Raus slandered him by telling other Estonian emigre leaders he (Heine) was in reality a double agent, serving the Russians.

Heine told a dramatic story of capture and escape, of daring guerrilla raids against the Russians in Estonia in his capacity as one of the nation's leaders in the fight for freedom, according to a copyrighted dispatch in the Washington Evening Star.

But the case took an even more dramatic turn when Raus claimed immunity from the slander suit, citing absolute privilege as an official of the U.S. government—not as an engineer for the Bureau of Public Roads but as an agent for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

And, what's more, the CIA, in an unheard of move, identified Raus as an agent. It said that he was acting in an official capacity when he allegedly spoke against Heine, that it had directed him to do so.